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FORMER CIA HEAD SAYS STAR WARS WON'T WORK
TORONTO

FILE ONLY

President Reagan's "Star Wars" space defense system will not work because the chance of human error is too great, but it is the best arms-control bargaining chip the West has, former CIA chief William Colby said today. A

"I take the word of hundreds of scientists who have said that the problems with software are so incredible the only way to test its effectiveness is by using it the first time," Colby told reporters after a speech to the Rotary Club of Ontario.

But he expressed skepticism about the estimated effectiveness of Star Wars -- formally known as the Strategic Defense Initiative -- that theoretically would be capable of shooting down nuclear missiles. It is in the research stage.

"The Soviets have 8,000 missiles aimed at us. A Star Wars defense is said to be 95 per cent efficient. So what if a lousy 400 nuclear warheads landed on our country?" Colby said.

But the Star Wars concept is useful, he said. "The Soviets are impressed with it. They think it just might work. It's the best bargaining chip we have around and there's a chance of enormous success in nuclear arms reductions if the president would step just a little bit towards negotiations involving Star Wars," he said.

In his speech, Colby, who was director of the CIA from 1973 to 1976, called for a reduction in the number of U.S. and Soviet nuclear missiles.

In October 1986, Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev failed to produce an arms-reduction agreement at their summit in Reykjavik chiefly due to Reagan's support for SDI.